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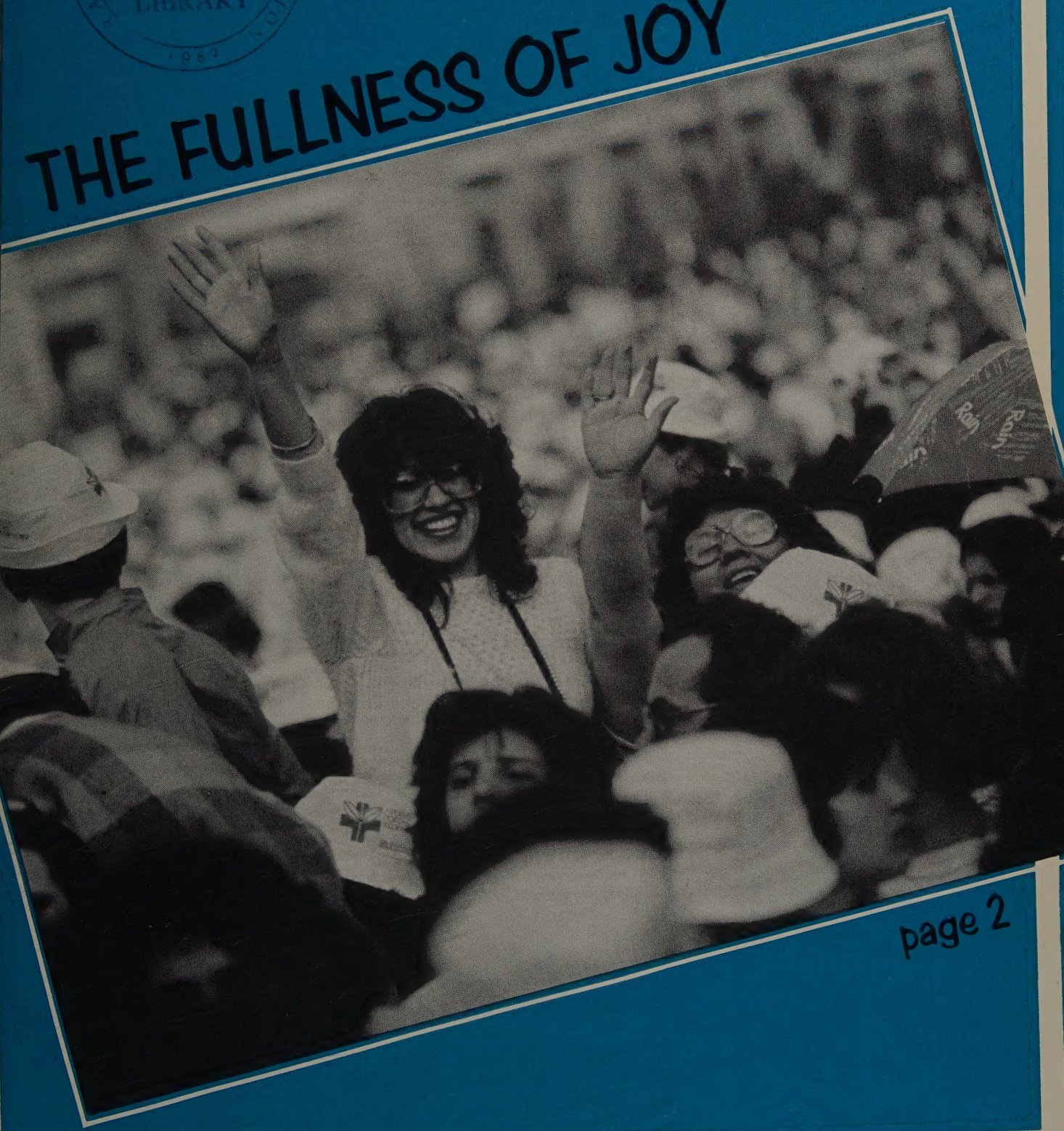
THE FULLNESS OF JOY



page 2

livingCity
1984 VOLUME 23 AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 8/9

2 *THE FULLNESS OF JOY: Chiara Lubich's address to the young people participating in the Holy Year celebration for the youth.*

10 *THE ROOTS OF A SPLENDID FLO ERING: The Church in Korea, founded lay people, celebrated its 200th anniversa*

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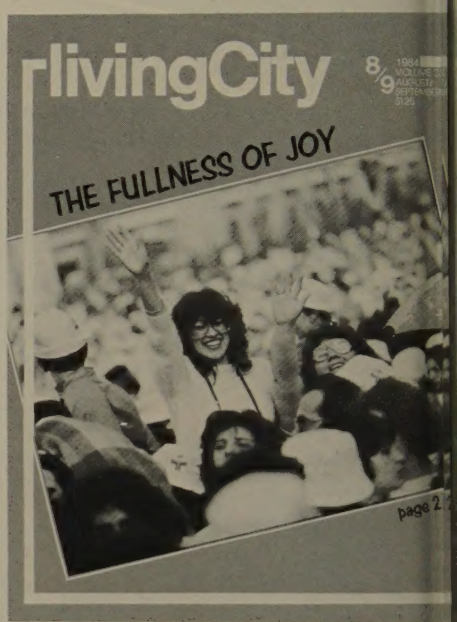

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Cover photo: Participants in the Jubilee for Youth held during the month of April in Ro

We would like to call our readers' attention to fact that this issue of *Living City* is for Aug and September.

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4 *AN EVENING WITH GEN VERDE: A film was recently made on one of the international musical groups of the Focolare Movement. We are publishing an interview with the director of the film.*

22 *FAMILY LIFE: A family moving from one country to another is a fairly common experience. What makes this one different?*

25 *THE GREAT ATHANASIUS: Aftermath of the Nicaean Council; the situation is still tense. We continue our 'reports' on the Early Church.*

CONTENTS

Chiara Lubich	The fullness of joy	2
Silvano Cola	The roots of a splendid flowering	10
Lucia Clari	An evening with Gen Verde	14

OTHER DEPARTMENTS

Word of Life	19
Experiences of life	20
Family life	22
Images for words	24
The early Church	25

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SPECIAL

The fullness of JOY

Among the many events of the Holy Year celebrations the world of the youth was not forgotten and, in fact, enjoyed five days of intense activities in Rome. They were days of audiences with Pope John Paul II, days of retreat, of listening, of learning, of sharing. Speakers were invited to address the thousands of young people on different themes: Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Frere Roger Schutz of the Taize community and Chiara Lubich, founder of the Focolare Movement who spoke on the theme of joy. The following is the text of her talk.

My dear young people,

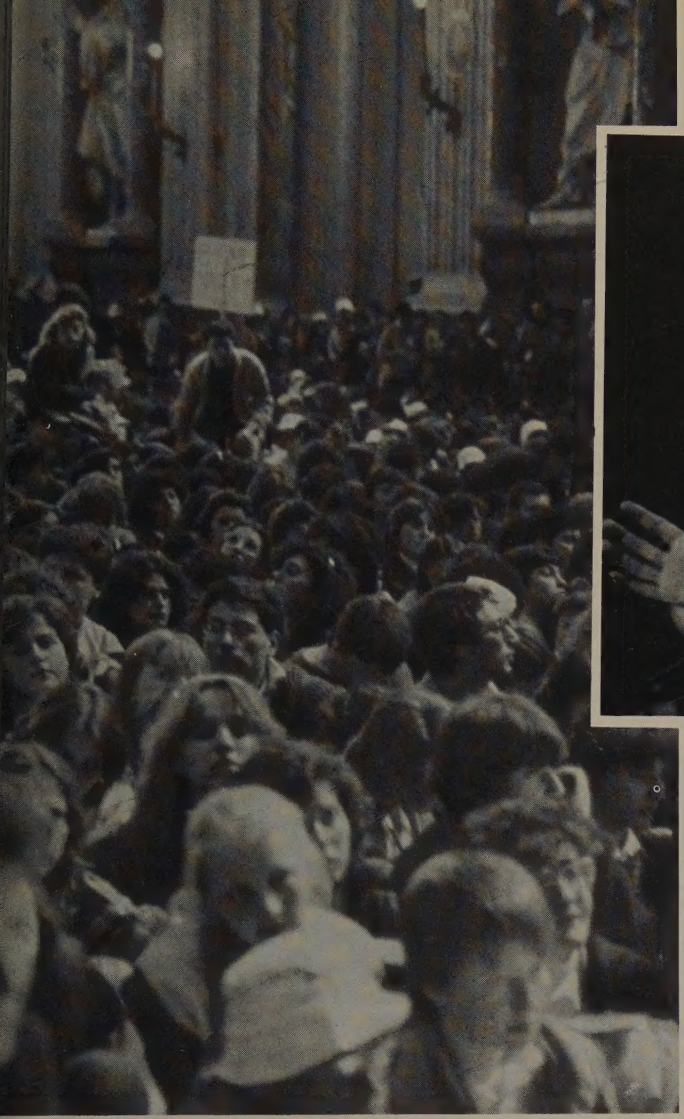
You have come here to Rome, the center of Christianity where Peter and Paul brought to completion their sacrifice; you have gathered here close to the Vicar of Christ, Our Holy Father, John Paul II, who has been awaiting you with much love.

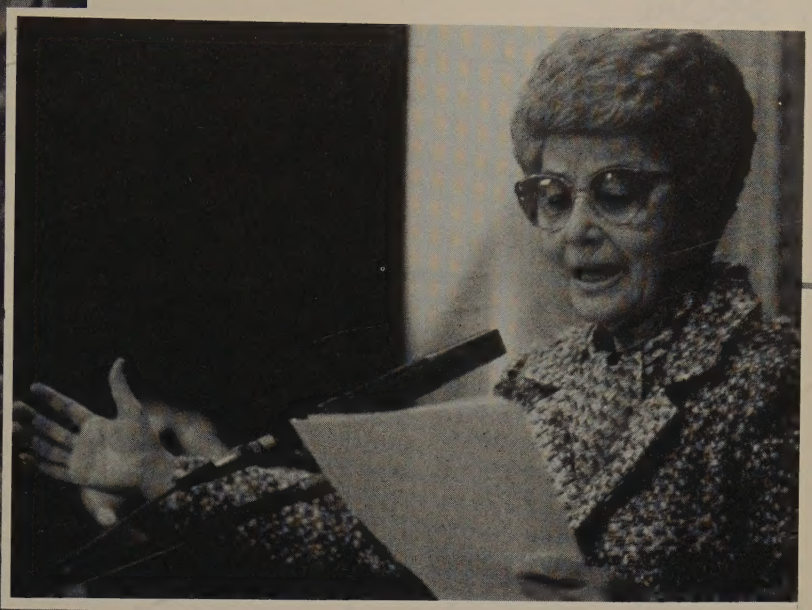
You have come together in this city. Why? To celebrate the Jubilee for youth, to celebrate the Jubilee of the Redemption. What does the Jubilee of the Redemption mean for you and for the many others who have come to Rome in this particular year?

Wide-ranging and very interesting answers can be given to this question. I think you have already heard much on this subject, which touches in such a vital way on the significance of our being Christian. However, if we wish to express in a few words the real motive for your presence here in Rome, one explanation could be the following —you are here in order to work towards your fulfillment: to reach *self-fulfillment*.

Self-fulfillment is without a doubt the natural aspiration of every person; but it is an overpowering desire in young people who are aware of the need to lay a solid foundation for their future lives, and who feel the urgency to give a purpose, possibly "*the* purpose", to their lives. To come to Rome and celebrate the Jubilee means to start out in the best direction towards reaching self-fulfillment. It may be for you a decisive step towards accomplishing it.

The fact is, my dear young people, that we have been created with something which is specifically ours, something which distinguishes the human being from all other beings. This something is a singular likeness to God. We know, in fact, that "God created man in





April 12, 1984 *Chiara Lubich (above) speaks to the crowd of young people in the Basilica of Saint John Lateran on the theme of joy.*

his image" (Gen. 1:27). But what does this mean? It means that human beings are truly themselves when they realize that their nobility lies in being capable of standing before God as someone whom God can address as "you." We reach self-fulfillment when we adhere to God's original plan and live out in our day-to-day existence this singular way of being, establishing a relationship, a communion with God. This is what the human being is. We have been thought of and fashioned like this. This explains our highest dignity, our lofty greatness.

But—as we all know—man did not keep himself at such heights, he did not show himself capable of responding to God's plan for him, and instead of developing the communion he was called to have with God, he broke it by sinning. Once his communion with God was shattered, also his relationship with other human beings became obscure, confused and therefore deteriorated. His rapport with the entire universe which God had created to be at his service and glory became distorted. Since the relationship with God and all creation had been destroyed by sin, the characteristic beauty of the human being also began to fade.

Thank heaven, however, God the Father had pity on mankind and sent His own Son into the world to restore in all persons, marred by that original fall and by all their personal sins, their authentic image. Jesus, who dies on the cross and rises, rehabilitates, redeems and once again gives all people the opportunity to rise up to their original splendor and even more. Jesus gives them the way to attain total fulfillment.

Fulfillment. What does self-fulfillment demand of those who think of it and want to reach it? We know the answer; we have a certain amount of experience. To fulfill oneself means to hope, perhaps to labor and struggle, to spend all one's energies and to suffer, but eventually to reach fullness. As persons, we are totally fulfilled when we possess authentic freedom, total peace and full joy.

My dear young people, perhaps until now we haven't been sufficiently aware of an unhoped-for possibility and irrefutable truth which the Church wants to assure us of in this Jubilee of the Redemption. It is this: the total self-fulfillment, to which Christ invites us in these days and always, has, as its effects, three priceless elements —freedom, peace and joy. The fact is that the fruit of the cross of Christ is the Holy Spirit: but since the Spirit pours out love in our hearts, we experience the effects of love which

are indeed freedom, peace and joy. You will hear about these topics today and in the days to come. In this hour we have been asked to talk about joy.

In our day Christians often cannot be distinguished by any particular joy. Generally speaking, to visit a predominantly Christian city is not very different from visiting a city inhabited by persons of other religions, or non believers. This is certainly not the way it was at the beginning of Christianity. At that time, Christians were so fascinated by what had just taken place, they saw so clearly that the promises of the Old Testament concerning salvation and the restoration of mankind to union with God had been fulfilled in Christ, they were so convinced that he had brought the solution to all their problems, that they exulted for joy. "With exultant and sincere hearts they took their meals in common, praising God..." (Acts 2:46-47).

If the particular covenant that God had made with the Hebrew people in the Old Testament made them so happy that they exclaimed: "I rejoice heartily in the Lord, in my God is the joy of my soul." (Is. 61:10), what should be the joy of Christians for whom the covenant with God has become such an intimate and profound union with Him that they can even possess Him in their hearts? "If anyone loves me ... we will come to Him—Jesus promised—and make our dwelling place with him" (Jn. 14:23).

If Jerusalem—called the "joy of all the earth" (Ps. 48:3)—and its temple, were the cause of great rejoicing for the chosen people, what should Christians experience having they themselves become the temples of the Holy Spirit?

If the power of God, which the Hebrews saw in all creation and which they personally experienced in God's many interventions in their favor (such as the liberation from slavery in Egypt) made them exult, how must Christians have reacted before the power of Christ, which freed them from the much heavier chains of sin and the devil, and led them back, in a certain way, to their original state, and which provoked a new creation in the entire cosmos? But, *above all*, if the

"But is it right to speak about joy?"

Before the Holy Year celebration for youth took place, Chiara Lubich was interviewed by Alberto Savorana of the Pontifical Council for the laity. We are publishing an excerpt from that interview.

Question: Do you think it's right to speak about "joy" in a world which, if we look at the facts, seems to have very little hope in the future?

Answer: The facts which speak of hopelessness are those we hear about every day in the news. They are serious facts, very serious, and they give the impression of a global volcano about to erupt.

This, however, is not the whole picture of our times. There are also consoling "signs", often very consistent ones, which prove that the situation is not all black.

I can give you an example. We cannot deny that today's world is characterized by tension, tension between east and west, between north and south, in the Middle East, in Central America. There are wars going on in many parts of the world, threats of conflicts in others. We witness the explosion of various phenomena of terrorism and other evils. Yet, paradoxically, at the same time, there are signs, indications, facts and events which point out that the world is tending towards unity.

This is seen very clearly in the Christian world as the Holy Spirit urges the various Churches and ecclesial communities towards unification after centuries of indifference and struggles.

It is evidenced by the Popes, for example Paul VI, whose doctrine is all permeated with the concept of unity. He already envisioned a united world under one authority, even politically.

The Second Vatican Council also attests to the fact that the world is moving towards unity. We find the word used repeatedly in all its documents.

There is also the fact that different institutions and international organizations work for unity; and modern means of commu-

nication bring the entire world into each community or family.

Even certain ideologies, which we cannot follow because we are Christian, do attempt to solve the problems of the world in a global and unitarian way.

There are also many movements which the Holy Spirit has brought about for the world of today which very firmly point the way towards unity, even if the progress and accomplishments of the Spirit do not usually make the headlines. They often underline love, unity, communion, the community; they inject vigor into Christian lives which are often lived in a rather individualistic manner, bringing to them a dynamism which resembles that of the first Christians and results in the spreading of faith, a reality which gives the greatest cause for hope. All of this to mention a sign of the times which certainly is not the only one.

It is exactly because of the situation of the world, with its negative and positive sides, that we can and must speak to young people about joy.

Besides everything else, speaking to them about Christian joy does not mean to give praise to a happy and carefree youth; it does not mean offering selfish enjoyment in a world where many suffer.

The joy of Christ is born above all out of the death of our own ego in a continuous thrust towards loving others.

Israelites sang hymns to Yahweh for the law, which God had communicated to them through Moses, so that they now knew how to walk through life: "I rejoice at your promise, as one who has found rich spoil" (Ps. 119:162), what hymns of praise must have been raised to heaven by the early Christians who, having received the law of heaven itself, brought on earth by Christ—the law of *love*—had found in it, by putting it into practice, *a wellspring of joy?*

Yes, my dear young people, this is what the early Christians found: a wellspring of joy. And they found it in love. They were happy, undoubtedly, because God dwelled in them, because they had become his temple, because they had become aware of his power. Their joy, however, was not only motivated by these divine and supernatural realities. The joy they experienced was also a gift which unexpectedly they had felt welling up in their hearts when they began to love.

To love one's neighbor was everything for a Christian, and this was very clear to them right from the beginning. It seemed that the echo of Jesus' words was still in the air—the words he used to describe the impressive scene of the last judgment, when one by one we will be examined on our lives. "Then the king will say to those on his right hand: 'Come, you whom my Father has blessed ... For I was hungry and you gave me food ... I was thirsty ...'" (Mt. 25:34-36) and so on. They were also mindful of St. Paul's letter in which he taught how to love, and shared his personal experience: "For the weak I made myself weak... I made myself all things to all men..." (1 Cor. 9:22).

For this reason they made themselves one with all the neighbors they met; they shared in the events of their lives, they participated in their sufferings and in their joys, they made the concerns of the others their own. In other words, they lived for the others, serving the others, so that their life-style was: '*to live the other*,' to live the others and no longer to live 'themselves.'

It is possible to understand how in "living the other," they also found the best training ground for the self-denial demanded by Christ of his followers: "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself..." (Mt. 16:24). They were dead to themselves because alive to love: they were all love and, before God who is Love, they were, so to say, like small suns before the Sun, their happiness was like a small reflection of God who is infinite happiness. They loved friends and enemies. They loved one another.

They loved one another. What distinguished them from other people? Was it their large-scale endeavors, their impressive works, their profound studies, their refined eloquence? Was it perhaps the miracles or ecstasies, which were certainly not lacking? No, it was love that distinguished them, mutual love. "Look at the way they love one another," it was said of them, "and how they are ready to die for one another" (Tertullian, "Apologetics 39:7). They loved one another and achieved unity; and it is in this unity that Jesus promised the fullness of joy.

The joy of the early Christians—and this is true in every century in which Christianity is understood in its essence and lived accordingly—was a joy which was truly new,

a joy they had never experienced before. It had nothing to do with simple laughter, cheerfulness or lightheartedness.

Nor was it "the exulting joy of living and being alive"—as Paul VI would say, "the peaceful joy of nature and silence;" nor the joy or "satisfaction of a job well done;" nor simply "the transparent joy of purity" or "chaste love..."[1] These are all wonderful examples of joy.

But the joy of the early Christians was different: it was similar to the exhilarating joy of the disciples at the descent of the Holy Spirit. It was *the joy of Jesus*. For just as Jesus has *his* peace, he also has *his* joy. He said: "I have told you this so that *my* own joy may be in you..." (Jn. 15:11).

The joy of the early Christians, which sprang forth spontaneously from the depths of their being, truly satisfied them.

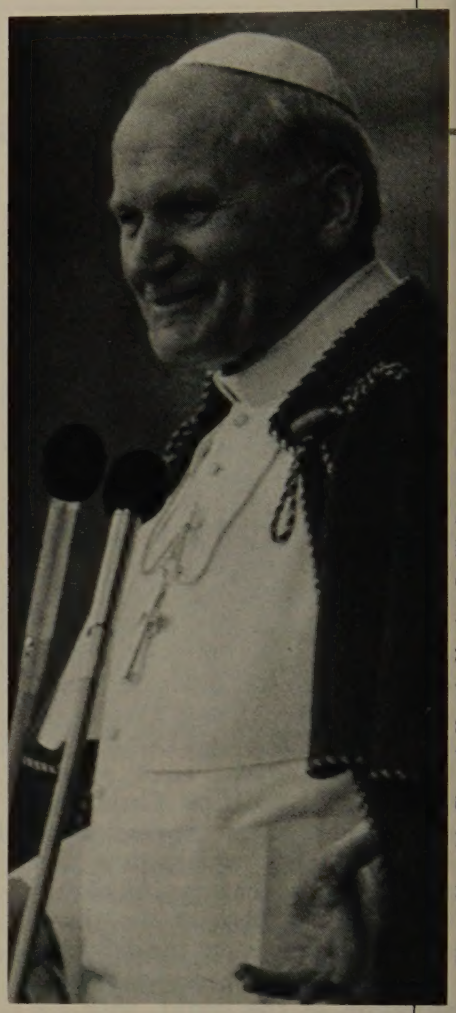
They had found what people in the past, today and always are searching for: God who—as we have seen—satisfies them completely. They had found communion with God, the essential element for reaching self-fulfillment.

In fact, love—charity—with which through baptism and the other sacraments Christ enriches the hearts of Christians—can be compared to a tiny plant. The deeper it sends its roots into the ground of fraternal charity (that is, the more people love their neighbors), the higher the stem grows upwards toward heaven and the more the love of God and communion with him grows in our hearts. It is not merely something we believe in through faith; it is something we experience. This was the happiness of the early Christians, adults and young people. It was expressed in liturgical celebrations filled with hymns of praise and thanksgiving.

Joy grew in their hearts also because with love and out of love they received light. They could *see*; they could understand the things of God which, in themselves, would be beyond human understanding (cf. 1 Cor. 2:10-16). They accepted the mysteries through faith, but these mysteries were not as obscure as one might think. They were able to penetrate them, to a certain extent, with such light that they had the impression of truly understanding them. This made them rejoice even more, and the joy of truth was added to the joy of love.

"If you are able to look at the world with the new eyes which faith gives you, then you will be able to move towards it with hands outstretched in a gesture of love. You will be able to discover in it, in the midst of so much wretchedness and so much injustice, unsuspected presences of goodness, fascinating perspectives of beauty, well-founded reasons for hope in a better future."

Pope John Paul II to the 200,000 young people gathered in St. Peter's Square April 14, 1984



Photos this article: Giancarlo Nuzzolo, Massimo Cardilli, Gerardo Carmineo, Filippo Miele, Gabriele Marsili.

Armed, therefore, only with love and light, and clothed with joy, they spread throughout the entire known world in a short amount of time: "We were born only yesterday," wrote Tertullian. "and we have already invaded the world..." (Tertullian, Apologetics 37:7).

Joy, therefore, and the early Christians. Joy and true, authentic Christians. Joy and young Christians. But what about today? How, as a rule, could we describe young people today, even in nations which have been evangelized for centuries? Do they have joy? Where do they look for joy?

If we look at the surveys—but you know more than the

surveys—we can see that in today's society where constant progress is present together with frightening prospects of nuclear war, with unemployment, impoverished values, finding joy is a problem for everyone. It is especially so for young people. While in past generations, young people poured their enthusiasm into working for political ideals or for social justice, the majority today tries to remain indifferent.

The incentive to change things, however, does still exist and young people express it in various ways such as committing themselves in the ecological movement or in peace movements. The aspect of social justice is also still attractive. We see many young people taking an interest in the underprivileged. Others seek joy in a more personal dimension in the field of music, sports or art. Many (more than one would think) seek joy in normal day-to-day life, getting involved in school, preparing themselves seriously for the future, enjoying family life, attracted by the mediocre standards created by the consumer mentality.

Generally speaking, young people look for their identity, and therefore for joy, in their relationships with others. Even the boy-girl relationship reflects the need for a sincere encounter, an encounter free of hypocrisy; but often, very often, this degenerates due to a lack of values.

We also know that in their search for happiness, a certain number of young people resort to drugs and crime; but these things in themselves do not satisfy them. Young people who seek joy by escaping into music, cars, photography, money, sports and even sex, drugs and alcohol, frequently reach this point after experiencing that people have given them nothing. Instead, if they find someone who offers them values worth living for, if they find an example, if they meet a model, they are able to show, even more than other people, what they are really capable of.

This has been our experience as well. We know hundreds of thousands of young people, and there are millions and millions of others all over the world who, although they share with other young people the search for worthwhile goals, for expressions which are typical of young people, they realize at the same time that all this is not enough to make them happy, that their joys are brief and incomplete, that the horizons of today's youth, in general, are too narrow. They aspire to wider, more universal horizons. Moved by the Spirit, they work to build a true foundation for their lives. They base their lives on the "one thing necessary" which Jesus spoke of—love, love which gives value to everything, universal love towards all people of the world.

These young people are present in every nation, in dioceses and in parishes, working at every level, helping, through their presence, to renew the orders and institutions which have come to life in the Church throughout the centuries.

A typical example of these are the young people who belong to the new movements which have begun in recent decades. Imitating the early Christians, they are setting off in our day, in a variety of ways and with modern means but all based on love and communion, (otherwise it is not Christianity), the Christian revolution from the angle of universal brotherhood. They are among the finest forces of the Church and they express its present-day hopes. They know, as did the first Christians, the meaning of *the true joy of Jesus*; it shines on their faces and overflows onto all those with whom they come in contact.

They know what joy is because they have experienced it through loving. They know what joy is because they have discovered another source of joy, the one discovered by the early Christians who rejoiced in being persecuted and who sang even as they went to martyrdom. They have understood a paradox of Christianity: that joy, the supernatural joy of Christ, can be found precisely where there is no joy—in suffering: *but* in suffering that is loved.

It is true that at times the combination of psychological and physical conditions or terrible spiritual trials can inhibit our joy, at least in its outward expression, as it was for Jesus on the cross. But, usually, these Christians, and all those who embrace their cross, have understood and experienced that just as the pruning of a tree is the prelude to a blossoming of new life, just as the cut of engrafting announces new fruits, suffering which is embraced out of love for Christ is an extraordinary fount of joy. In fact, the joy of a Christian is like a ray of light reflected from a tear, the

essence of love distilled from suffering. That is why it is a unique, supernatural joy which attracts others as would a glimpse of Paradise.

Moreover, Jesus asked of those who want to follow Him not only self-denial ("deny yourself"), but also love for the cross ("take up your cross"). These Christians are therefore freed from circumstances which others might see as obstacles to self-fillment—situations from which no one is immune, question to which only Jesus can give a complete answer—misfortunes, illness and death itself. Because of a divine alchemy, everything turns into joy for these people and adds fuel to the flame of love which they feel called to enkindle in the world as they await the full and never-ending joy of the life to come.

Joy is the first gift Christianity is called to give to the world. Joy is an unquestionable witness to the fact that Christ has come to restore all people to their original fullness and to enable them to reach self-fulfillment. In fact, if people are happy and can be happy even in adverse circumstances, what could possibly be missing?

My dear young people, before long the world will be in your hands. Don't deprive it of joy. Moreover, you are on the threshold of an era in which, because of the means of communication, which draw all people closer to one another because of the mass media, which bring the world into every home, and because of the many other features of the modern world, dialogue with the faithful of other religions will be a common experience.

We should prepare ourselves to offer to all these other brothers and sisters of ours the authentic experience of our religion so that they can compare it with their own, and highlight the truths we have in common with their own faiths and rich cultures in which the Word of God is not at all foreign. This will encourage them to accept with us the Truth in all its fullness: Christ Jesus.

Even now you face a world that is indifferent, frozen by atheism, overburdened with unanswered questions and very often given to sadness. This world is awaiting joy from you, true joy that does not deceive. May this Jubilee mark for you, as it has for many other young people like you, the decisive step towards possessing this joy.

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1) "Where man finds joy" Paul VI.

Hundreds of thousands of young people attended the activities surrounding the Holy Year celebration for youth. Pope John Paul II addressed them during a general audience, entrusting to the generation of the third millennium the "civilization of life."

Following Chiara Lubich's talk, four brief experiences on joy were shared "to encourage everyone," as she stated. We are publishing one of them as told by Abenair from Brazil.

I was born in Brazil, in a very simple family. I was the third to the last of fourteen children, and so I was able to see what my elder brothers and sisters did with their lives: studies, work, settling down, family, children and then the boredom

of a monotonous life. Wasn't there anything more interesting? Since we lived along a river I didn't know how the families in the city lived. Since I wanted to discover new horizons, at the age of thirteen I left home.

In the city, everything was new to me. I didn't have anywhere to stay so I slept wherever I could. I could do whatever I wanted and nobody stopped me from trying out all sorts of adventures. I had my first experiences with drugs and sex. Drugs gave me hours of exhilarating joy, but when its effects wore off, I had the impression that I had stolen an unreal happiness, because I had done nothing to merit it.

I began to feel old and I was only fifteen years of age. I would have liked to go home, to have at least a roof over my head, a bed and something to eat...but they refused to take me back. My father was afraid of my ruining his name and forbade me to use it. I could have died then and nobody would have cared. I went back to my group of friends where there was a girl I loved and who loved me. I wanted to share my life with her. We were both in the same boat. Every night our group met in an old fortress on a cliff overlooking the sea. No one ever disturbed us. But one night the lights of the police caught us by surprise while we were under the influence of drugs. Filled with panic we all started running in every direction. It was so dark that we couldn't see where we were going. My girlfriend fell over the cliff. There among the rocks, she met her death, I screamed as I ran. Why was life so cruel? She had been my only consolation and she had been taken away from me.

Crushed and confused, I took refuge in a car. At five o'clock the next morning someone knocked at the window; he helped me and brought me to the hospital. It was strange—I didn't know Miguel but he came to visit me at the hospital every day, and I always felt well and relieved when he was around. He asked me if I liked music. One day he brought his guitar and sang a song about the Prodigal Son. It seemed that he was telling the story of my miserable life. The only difference was that the song ended in a different way—the son returned home and made peace with his father and they celebrated together. Instead, I had been rejected.

Who was this father who wanted to welcome me? I didn't understand. Then a subtle light began to penetrate my mind: perhaps this father was God. I found myself believing in his love. It is to him that I must return—I thought—because he is waiting for me.

I bombarded Miguel with a thousand questions. He began to tell me a marvelous story. He told me of a group of young people, of Christians who had given God, who is love, the first place in their lives and who made mutual love the law of their existence. I also wanted to live this way. I wanted to return home to win over the love of my family.

I began with my mother. I would hide in front of the house, waiting for her to look out the window. Then I would run and bring her a flower. The third time I did this, she asked me when I was coming home.

With my father I found another solution. A man had been hired to wake him up every morning by knocking at his window so that he could open the coffee shop on time. I made an agreement with this man to allow me to do it for him. I didn't want the money —I only wanted to have the opportunity to get closer to my father. When payday came around, this man told my father that I was the one who had been waking him up. The following day my father was waiting for me behind the window. As soon as I knocked, he opened the window and said to me: "Would you like to open the coffee shop this morning? I see that you get up quite early, so it shouldn't be too much of a problem for you." I didn't know what to say. I wasn't worthy of his trust so he helped me by saying, "You are my son after all."

I kept using all my imagination to love each member of my family and win their trust. Little by little I saw my family becoming more and more united even though they didn't know my secret. A few weeks later I returned home to stay. My new friends, Miguel and the others, had taught me how to live with those around me as Jesus wants. I learned that we should be ready to give our lives for one another. When we succeeded in doing this, we experienced a marvelous sense of peace and above all joy. It was a joy I had never experienced before; a joy that cannot be compared to anything on earth—an unending celebration. □

The roots of a splendid flowering

by SILVANO COLA

More than a million people were present with Pope John Paul II for the canonization of 103 Korean martyrs in the huge Youido Square in Seoul. This year was the 200th anniversary of the Church in Korea. How it arrived there is a fascinating story.

Were it not so recent and therefore so perfectly documented, the story of how the Church was born in Korea could almost fit into the category of an adventure novel. It is perhaps a unique case wherein a local Church of national scope was created not by missionary priests but by native lay people. What got it started? It was a book, almost 400 years old, written by the famous Jesuit Matteo Ricci after he finally managed to enter the fabulous city of Peking where the Emperor of China Wan-li welcomed him with great curiosity. Matteo Ricci, in fact, was also a mathematician, and astronomer and expert map maker, and the emperor was quite pleased to meet this famous Italian in person, the man who, after a short stay in Macao to learn Chinese (1582), was able, three years later, to publish a chart, called the Chinese Worldmap. The Emperor welcomed him with pleasure, in 1601, and saw to it that he was entertained in learned conversation with the intellectuals of his court.

As it happened, however, these conversations, which may have started out with topics such as mathematics or astronomy, more often than not slipped into the realm of religion, giving Matteo Ricci the opportunity to learn a good deal about Confusianism and about oriental thought. Eventually he wrote a treatise called *The True Doctrine of God*, which was considered to be a splendid synthesis both of Western and Oriental thought. It was an authentic best seller with diffusion all over China and Japan, not to mention the fact that 200 years later it was still widely read as a classic.

Let us now move to Korea. It was in 1784 that the volume came into the hands of a group of intellectuals who were greatly impressed by its content. They tried to study it in depth but wished to learn more. How should they go about it? They figured that there certainly had to be some Christians living in Peking, and so the most logical solution, they thought, was to have one of them sneak into Chinese territory. To do this, they had to elude the vigilance of both the Korean authorities who had no love to spare for these "progressionist intellectuals", and the Chinese were not too happy to see any Koreans in their country unless it was the official group that was sent once a year from Seoul to pay taxes. In those days, Korea was subject to China.

As providence willed it, one of them, Sung-hoon Lee, happened to be the son of the official who headed the Korean delegation in chrage of bringing their taxes to the emperor. He

Courtesy of Korean Cultural Service New York

succeeded in having himself included in the official cortege and, once in Peking, while his colleagues were busy at Court, he managed to slip out of the palace and look for the European missionaries. He found them, and in the space of the few weeks at his disposal, took instruction in Christian doctrine. By the time he had to rejoin the delegation to return to Korea, hewas already baptized. He was no longer Sung-hoon Lee, but Peter Lee, a truly apt name for the man who brought Christianity to Korea. His colleagues were soon won over to the new faith and formed a small Christian community. Above all they were struck by Jesus' revelation that before God all men and women were equal, children of the same Father and therefore all brothers and sisters to one another. What a revolution! But it was this very revolution that nailed them to the cross. It was a repetition of the events we read about in the Acts of the Apostles. The new Christians of Korea were accused of being fanatics, traitors of their forefathers' traditions, bent on overthrowing their country's political and social system, and they were therefore victims of a fierce persecution. It was the time of the catacombs and hiding all over again, a most fertile time for the spreading of the Gospel.

But persecution also creates problems. How to keep the community united? Who should be made responsible for their remaining one heart and one soul? Peter Lee recalled from his Peking visit having seen that whenever a bishop was present at a liturgical service everybody obeyed him, priests and lay people alike; and that when there was no bishop, there was always a priest to celebrate Mass, to distribute the Eucharist, to baptize... It was really a great pity that because of the hurry to rejoin his delegation on their return to Korea he missed the opportunity to learn more about this aspect of Christianity.

He therefore tried to reconstruct in his mind all the details of the ceremonies he had seen in Peking and also went carefully over the books he had managed to smuggle out of China. Then finally, he gathered all the Christians around him and said to one, "You'll be the bishop and you'll do this and this..." and to another: "You'll be our priest and you'll do this and this." Then, after everyone approved, they prayed together that those elected might accomplish their tasks properly. The year was 1787. Things were not quite according to the rules, perhaps, but at least the small Korean community now

had its own hierarchy!
True, things really were not exactly according to the rules, and the more these first Korean Christians read over the precious books, the more they began to doubt. It would be wise, perhaps, to send one more person to Peking to consult the Bishop personally. So they decided to do that and this time it was Paul Youn who, in 1790, managed to meet Bishop Gouvea. On hearing the story of these first Christians of Korea, the Bishop didn't know whether he should cry with emotion or smile at the simplicity and innocence of their faith. "In any case," he said finally, "let us thank the Lord for the gift of faith that you have received, and let us pray that He may help you persevere in spite of the persecutions. As for your bishops and your priests—and here he grinned into his thick beard—you had a lot of courage to elect them yourselves. You know, Paul, the bishops are the successors of the Apostles."

Bishop Gouvea gave Paul a long explanation of the chapter of Catholic theology which Peter hadn't had the time to learn. Half embarassed and half enraptured, afraid of being unable to give a full, correct report of all this, Paul asked the bishop to write down the basic concepts. In order to save the precious document from being confiscated at the border, he also asked him to write it on a very fine silk scarf which could be easily hidden.

The young Korean community had quite a shock at the news Paul brought back from Peking. For a full three years they had been imitating gestures and ceremonies which were actually without any effect! And yet the effect was not missing, for the community had remained united, and their spirit was as fresh as ever. But how could they go on without a priest and without the sacraments. True, Korea was closed to foreigners, but couldn't the Bishop smuggle in a priest brave enough to come, whom they could keep hidden from the authorities?

The bishop agreed, and already a few months later there was an attempt, though unsuccessful, to have a missionary come to Korea. He was not admitted into the country.

Four more years passed before a second attempt proved successful. Father James Chu finally made it into Korea, the

Greeting the heads of the traditional religions in Seoul, the Pope emphasized the Catholic Church's desire to enter into a fraternal dialogue with all the great religions which have been guiding humanity throughout history. At Pusan, before tens of thousands of laborers, farmers and fisherman, he said that, "Jesus clearly belonged to the working world." His teachings show us clearly that, "The worker is far more important than the product of his work." To the intellectuals and artists the Pope confirmed once more that, "This dialogue between Church and culture is great importance for the future of mankind." "We must now also work to bring various cultures themselves closer together ... in order that universal values may become the heritage of all."

"Land of the Morning Calm." His presence was to be discovered five years later and he died as a martyr during the persecutions of 1801; but during the brief period given to him, he went from house to house, in the dark of night, teaching catechism, baptizing, administering confirmation, correcting any deviations whenever they occurred, translating various columes of Catholic doctrine into Korean and, almost as though he foresaw his imminent death and the immediate future of the young Church, which in fact was to remain deprived of missionaries for another thirty years, he founded an association of Christians committed to encouraging one another in deepening the knowledge of Catholic doctrine and helping one another in spreading the Gospel among realtives, friends and neighbors.

Thirty-five years of persecution did not extinguish their faith. On the contrary, it was enkindled by it. By the time the missionaries of the Paris Foreign Mission came to Korea they found a Christian community of about six thousand scattered in small groups all over the country. But the life of the missionaries was not to be an easy one.

Shortly before the persecutions of 1866, Bishop Berneux wrote: "The sword is constantly over our heads. In the situation we live in, we can have neither a chapel, nor a place to meet. On Sundays, Christians meet in small groups of no more than 15 persons—now in one home, now in another, always in great secrecy, in order not to attract attention.

A picture of the newly-canonized Korean saints.

In a low voice they say the prayers given to them by the bishop, listen to the explanation of the Gospel, and then go back to their homes to study the catechism and teach it to their children.

The presence of the missionaries was always risky, because their long western noses betrayed their foreign origin. When they travelled, they had to dress like Koreans in mourning, because that allowed them to cover their faces with a scarf. They would arrive at night at the places indicated by the catechists, to hear confessions, to baptize, celebrate Mass and then move on quickly to another house before dawn.

The is how the Church of Korea was born out of the initiative of lay people assisted by missionaries. In 1942 it already had about 100 native priests. Today it counts 1,700,000 Catholics.

Korea now has 103 new saints, canonized on May 6 by Pope John Paul II during his visit to Korea. They include 93 lay people and 10 priests of the Paris Foreign Mission. The number includes people of a wide variety of ages and occupations; entire families together faced martyrdom to bear witness to the faith but, as Pope John Paul II pointed out in the Mass of canonization, their death "has become the beginning of new life," a life that has since been "extended to others. It became the leaven of the Church." □

An evening wit

Interview with film director Leandro Castellani on his film reportage on the internationally famous musical ensemble Gen Verde.

by LUCIA CLARI

"After so many years of so-called professionalism, you can end up by acquiring a certain self-assurance, a calm vision of the results you want to achieve and of the best way to achieve it. So that the experience of a *real* debut, with all its apprehensions and implications—such as the powerful desire and extra commitment to do more and better, the eagerness to find new solutions and, above all, the fear of a possible failure—is less and less likely to happen once we reach a certain routine.

"Yet, it did happen when I undertook this work—it gave me the pleasure and challenge of a debut all over again."

With these words Leandro Castellani, the well known Italian film director, author of numerous scripts, and TV documentaries, told us what the making of *An Evening with Gen Verde*, the International music and dance ensemble of the Focolare Movement had meant to him.

For someone who knows Castellani only through his fame as a director, this kind of statement may indeed seem amazing and even disarming. But those who had a chance to talk to him or follow him on the set, realize that this simplicity and humility are part of his way of life and of his passionate and tenacious love for what he calls his "job."

It was a few years ago, during the shooting of a TV program on the mini-city of Loppiano,[1] that Leandro

Maria do Carmo from Amazonia and Maria del Carmen from Argentina performing the dance entitled The Hope of Nations. *The show,* One World, One Home *was filmed by Leandro Castellani and has been presented in Italian, German, Spanish and English. Gen Verde is planning a tour in the fall in the United States and Canada. To this date they have made forty-seven tours in Italy, Spain, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Holland, France, Malta, Ireland, Great Britain and the United States. In over 800 shows, Gen Verde has brought their*

Gen Verde

message to a million people in theaters and concert halls like the Konzerthaus in Vienna, the Philharmonic in Liverpool, Drury Lane Theatre in Chicago, the Palais des Beaux Arts in Brussels, the Milan Conservatory, in sports arenas, parks, army bases and prisons.

Catellani first met the Gen Verde group. It was mutual esteem and appreciation at first sight and when, a few years later, he was asked to do a film on them, he simply asked "Well, when do we start?"

This is how, a few months ago, *An Evening with Gen Verde* came to be. It is a lively film presentation which takes the viewers along on various Gen Verde tours, they watch their performances and become acquainted with their theme: *One World, One Home*—which is one of the folk-rock operas of the group—the theme of unity.

Referring all the time to the double term "art-life," Castellani introduces us into the everyday experiences of the group and its members, going back to the beginnings of their methods of "creating together" both in the field of music and of choreography.

We went to see him in his studio in Rome, where he works with his wife, Maria Grazia and where his four-year-old son Aldo, already likes to think of himself as an "actor," hamming it up in front of daddy's TV cameras.

Mr. Castellani, what is the recurring motif of this film?

"Since I started out with the premise that this was not going to be my film but rather that of the Gen Verde, it was clear that there could be no misrepresentation on my part. All I had to do was to 'read' with a cinematographic eye and tell the story of a theatrical event which carries its own message without expecting to re-create the theatrical dimension of the show.

"I asked myself, how could I, with the means at my disposal, convey the emotion and the impressions the Gen Verde inspire with their show? How could I capture the message which the performers get across to their audiences not only through their performance but by their very presence on stage and off, by their contacts with the world outside, their rapport with the public, and so on? The film cannot, must not, and does not want to offer a surrogate of the show itself nor of the relationship the group establishes with their audiences. What we are giving, I hope, is 'another moment' of the Gen Verde presence and of their dialogue with the people."

We know that the film is already being shown on closed circuit TV even outside of Italy. It has been seen in many schools, in prisons, in youth centers, even on military bases. One entire high school not only sent many letters to Gen Verde but even went to Loppiano to meet the group personally. If you were to present this film, Mr. Castellani, how would you describe it?

"I would say that it is about a group of artists who for years have been meeting their audiences to give them, through the language of art and music, a message of love and unity. The film, as I said before, wants to be another new mo-

ment of encounter. To those who do not know the Gen Verde it is an invitation to meet them, and to those who have met them, it is a chance to get to know them better. The film also wants to be a sort of photograph one sends to friends for Christmas or for some joyous occasion, a moment to be remembered by all."

How did you feel about working with such a diverse group?

"Why so diverse? Because the girls of the Gen Verde group belong to different races and cultures, and speak different languages? Because of their different talents? I think that all this only enriches their unity; it is the harmonious composition of this diversity that makes unity more of a reality among them. To me, working with them was very easy, and an enormous pleasure.

"I knew I could count on total professionalism, that I could 'demand' those often exhausting repetitions which are so necessary in making a film. They knew that it was for the sake of quality and in the interest of all. When we try to be equals in our commitment and in our mutual availability, working together becomes a liberating experience.

If you were to re-do the film, would you make any changes?

"Every piece of work is a point of arrival and a point of departure, a partial approach to a theme, a problem, to facing a different experience. It is natural, therefore, that we should want to make a new start and, in a sense, make changes. But we don't do it in order to destroy what has already been done—which, after all, represents a result which we have reached—but to go beyond it. If I were to change something on this film, it would be in the sense that new encounters, new situations, new stimuli would no doubt open the way to a new cinematographic reality. I would by no means try to change it in the sense of adding or subtracting something, nor would I put one thing in the place of another.

The Gen Verde could be considered a rather "original group." How would you say it fits into the panorama of the artistic expressions of the young people of our day?

"I think that the artistic expressions of today's young people are extremely vast, as far as the number of groups, ensembles and persons is concerned, but substantially limited in the range of expressions and experiences. There seems to be a law of monotony ruling them. I would say that every artist, every group, while frantically searching for originality and eccentricity, is well aware of the fact that success is actually

Gen Verde

in concert

2nd North American Tour!

November 14 - West Lafayette, Indiana
November 18 - Chicago, Illinois
November 23 & December 1 - Lodi, New Jersey
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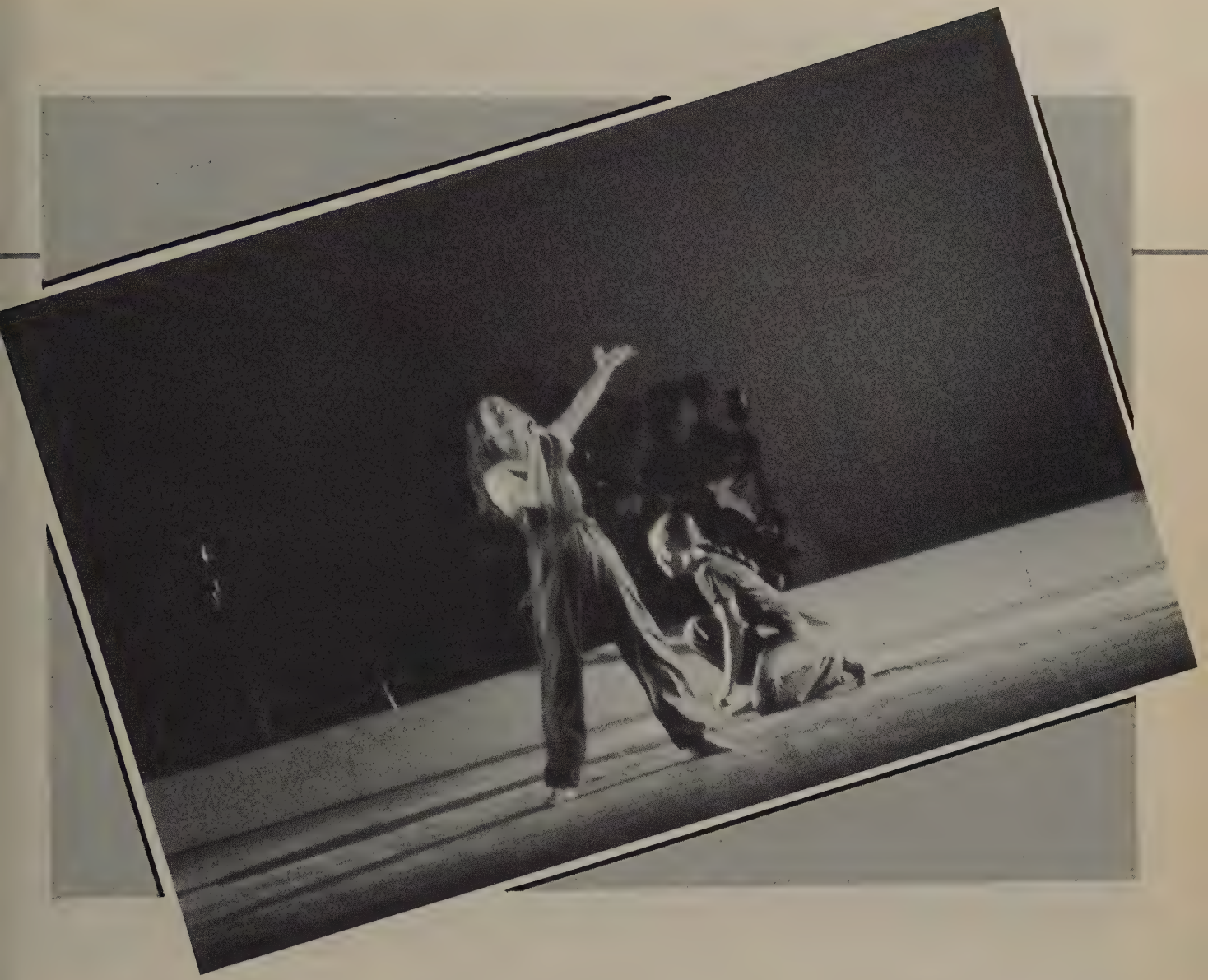
For information on tickets contact the Focolare Center nearest you (see inside back cover).



Gen Verde: twenty young women from Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Colombia, Korea, the Philippines, Germany, Hong Kong, the Canary Islands, Italym Scotland, Spain, Uganda. What brought them together in this adventure? The idea of unity among all people as proposed in the Gospel.

ruled by what is in fashion. They feel, in other words, that they must be 'in' in order to function. This is the dilemma of the young of today—the spirit of rebellion is often no more than another face of the acceptance of peer pressure.

"The Gen Verde are high above this entanglement of contradictions. They present expressions that are 'new' but not modern in the sense of being tied to fashion. This characteristic of the Gen Verde can actually be disconcerting at first, but then one has to admit that as a group they are faithful to their image which is constantly evolving and being brought up to date without ever contradicting or betraying itself.

Don't you think that the clearly stated Christian message of the Gen Verde Show may stand in the way of their rapport with the public? What is it, in their show, that makes them reach even those who do not share their view of life?

"The answer to the first part of the question is no, it does not stand in the way. First, because the message is not something introduced from the outside, it is not a sort of label but it *is* the show. I mean that this coincidence is achieved in full observance of the rules. The fine artistic quality is never made a mere instrument of the message.

"In the second place, the public senses immediately that the message is something that is deeply felt and lived.

"Third, there is a remarkable effort to convey the Christian message as it is, in its universality and simplicity. They do not adorn it with glitter or offer solutions geared to one particular taste, one culture, one passing moment in history. All

this, and much more, in my opinion, contributes to the Gen Verde's success with all kinds of audiences.

Among the highlights of your film, you often refer to the thoughts of Chiara Lubich, founder of the Focolare Movement, a personality known internationally for her concrete contribution towards unity. What importance do you attribute to figures of this caliber who, in the world today, have been able to foster a constructive dialogue among men and women of different races, cultures and beliiefs?

"It is the different 'cultures' which are responsible for the divisions among people: their divided faiths, opinions, struggles, even their day-to-day life. While, in this century of technology the world becomes more and more 'one,' people and nations seem to be more and more divided. There is talk of dialogue, but this too can be misleading—like a dialogue between the deaf, or between people who speak different languages and can't understand one another, the confusion of the Tower of Babel. Unity is a word that means much more. It means, first of all, that we must try to get rid of all the extra layers of dust which centuries of history, wars and distorted ideologies have deposited on people and nations. Once we shed this dust we discover, little by little, all that we have in common.

"Figures like Chiara Lubich have the rare value and privilege of offering words that are true and simple, untouched by the dust of history, and thus convince us that unity is possible. This might be an explanation 'according to the flesh,' if you will. But then there is an explanation 'according to the spirit,' and here the story of people's thrust toward unity takes on another name, and it is called 'providence.' In this sense figures like Chiara Lubich open for us horizons of a far more reaching hope." □

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1)A small city built by the Focolare Movement near Florence, Italy. It embodies a concrete expression of a society founded on the Gospel. Its inhabitants live according to the spirituality of the Focolare Movement.

WORD OF LIFE

"We know that God makes all things work together for the good of those who love him."
(Rm. 8:28)

"We know that God makes all things work together for the good of those who love him"

In order to understand this marvelous sentence, which will never cease to throw light on the events which weave through our lives, we should read it in the context of Saint Paul's thought, which reveals to all people God's love for them.

In the Apostle's letters, in fact, we often come across the theme of the love of God for us and his grace which goes beyond our every weakness. God has a plan of love on each one of us. He has thought of us from all eternity. He created us and "predestined us to share the image of his Son" (Rm. 8:29; Eph. 1:4s). The fact that God sent his Son into the world and gave us his Spirit guarantees that he will do everything, will try everything, to bring his plan to completion (cf. Rm. 8:32; 8:15-17). He "makes all things work for the good of those who love him." This concept is confirmed in the word of life for this month.

"We know that God makes all things work together for the good of those who love him"

"...of those who love him."

It is not just for anyone, therefore, that all things work for the good, but for those who love God and respond to his love. God's love for us is not generalized; no, it is a personal and special love which makes all things work for the good, that is, for the salvation, for the true happiness, for the spiritual progress of those who love him.

"We know that God makes all things work together for the good of those who love him"

"...All things..." Not only his Words, or the Sacraments, or other means which he has given for his Church, for our spiritual well-being. All this is evident.

The Apostle wants to tell us something more; that for those who believe in the love of God and love him, the many circumstances which condition our existence are not merely a matter of chance; they are not led by the blind laws of nature or by the will of human beings. They are guided by this love; they are the many opportunities and means which God makes use of to bring to completion the work of our salvation. He hides behind all the events of our life, as a particular state of our health, an unforseen situation, a sudden change of program due to circumstances; behind the particular conditions of our life, or a sudden spiritual trial, or a difficulty at work. He hides behind the fact that we meet certain people and may be in a certain place. Everything, for those who love God, even the failures of their past life, acquire a positive significance because in all these circumstances they experience the love of God who wants to guide them towards sanctity.

"We know that God makes all things work together for the good of those who love him."

We can perceive this loving guidance of God, however, inasmuch as we love him; that is, inasmuch as we abandon ourselves to him, convinced that his thoughts are not ours and that our salvation and the full realization of ourselves as Christians follow ways that do not always coincide with what we expect.

If instead we do not trust him, we will not be able to see and experience the love of God which is present in all these events.

We should also remember that to believe in the love of God does not mean to entrust him, in a fatalistic way, with the solution to our problems; it means struggling to conquer sickness, suffering, injustice and evil in all its forms.

A Christian equilibrium, in fact, consists in uniting together a childlike abandonment to whatever God wants for us with our own personal initiative.

"We know that God makes all things work together for the good of those who love him."

EXPERIENCES

The following are experiences in living the Gospel which some of our readers have shared with us.

How can we live this word of life?

Above all, we should never stop before the merely exterior and material aspect of things, but believe instead that in every event there is a message through which God wants to express his love.

We will then see how life, which may appear to us like an embroidery of which we see only the many knots and threads rather confusedly interwoven, is, in reality, something very different. It is a marvelous design that the love of God is weaving on the basis of our faith.

Secondly, we should abandon ourselves, completely and full of trust, to this love in every moment, in great and small things alike. Moreover, if we are able to trust in God in the ordinary circumstances of life, he will give us the strength to trust in him even in the most difficult moments, like a great trial, serious illness, even at the moment of our death.

Let's try to live like this then, not in a self-interested way, that is so that God might reveal to us his plans and we might find his consolation, but out of love; and we will see how this complete trust is a source of light and infinite peace for us and for many others.

Chiara Lubich

A PHONE CALL AT THE OFFICE

A short time ago I changed from one department to another in the business establishment where I am employed. As a result of this change I had the opportunity of meeting a young girl who was having a very difficult experience in her personal life.

One day I invited her out to lunch and we became better acquainted. After a few days she confided in me the sad story of her broken engagement. Failing to see her in the office one day, I telephoned her house, thinking that something serious might have happened since on the previous day she had left work crying bitterly in a state of desperation.

On the telephone she burst into tears, saying that there was nothing left for her to do but to end it all by taking a bottle of barbituates which she had there beside her. Since I was in the office, I could not express myself freely, but I did try to help her in whatever way I could, which in that moment was to remain at the telephone to listen to her even if I might have found myself in an embarrassing situation. I held the receiver tightly against my ear, but one could hear her sobs even on the other side of the desk at which I was seated.

As in every other place of business, so it is also in my office that we are asked not to carry personal problems to our place of work. Therefore, for a moment I thought, "Maybe she will get over this shortly." I was almost going to say good-by to my colleague on the phone as I thought of the possibility of being shamed by the crushing glances from others in the office because of the nature of our telephone conversation. Just then I remembered that phrase of the Gospel: "I was hungry and you gave me food" (Mt. 25:35). At the end of my life Jesus could say to me, "I was about to take my own life out of desperation...." I remained at the telephone until my sorrowful colleague assured me that she was closing the bottle of barbituates and that she would call me back later.

From that day on, so many things in her life have changed, but especially this, that every passing day she tries to find a new equilibrium, opening up more towards the others, and she has made her peace with God.

E.C.

INCIDENT AT THE MALL

One day as I was walking through our small shopping center, I heard someone call my name from the restaurant/bar. When I walked in I saw this man I knew sitting drinking beer. It was obviously not his first drink that day. In fact, he had been a heavy drinker for many years, but had gone off

of it for about three years. My first reaction when I saw him was anger. "How could he go back to that way of life?" I thought. Secondly, the other people in the restaurant were looking at me. I felt uncomfortable and wanted to walk back out of there.

A sentence of Scripture rang in my ears: "Love you neighbor as yourself." I sat down to listen to him. He talked a lot saying, among other things, that he hadn't gone to church for a long time and he felt that God had abandoned him. All I could do was listen as he brought up all his problems and sufferings. Yet, as time passed I could see him growing calmer until at one point he stood up to leave. Managing a little smile, he thanked me for taking the time to listen when no one else would. He seemed to be more at peace and I was too.

L.R.

THE EXTRA MILE

Returning home very late one evening, I decided to ring the doorbell of Stella. I had been told by the neighbors that she was very ill. On previous occasions Stella had always treated me very coldly, sometimes refusing to acknowledge my greetings; once she spoke to me sharply on the telephone. But now, even though it was late, I rang the bell, overcoming the feeling that Stella might not welcome me because I am black. I wanted to love her inspite of the past and "go the extra mile."

When I rang, she weakly called out to me to come in and she appeared overjoyed at seeing me. With great detail she explained her sufferings and treatments. She explained that she remained with the door unlocked so that anyone might have easy access to her apartment inasmuch as she could not get out of bed. As she spoke of not being able to eat anything or to quench her insatiable thirst, I tried to think of something to give her. I went out and bought her watermelon and lemon sherbet, both of which she ate with enjoyment.

The following Saturday while shopping for groceries, I bought her freshly squeezed grape juice from the market. When I arrived at her apartment with it, I found her gravely ill. The doctor had told her that her only hope was to go to the hospital but she was afraid. The nurse she was expecting failed to arrive and she was desperate. I tried to help by walking the several blocks to the branch office that was supposed to send the nurse but found it closed.

On returning to Stella's apartment, I entered her bathroom where I found that the bathtub was filled with dirty clothes which I offered to wash. When I finished, she asked me to sit on the side of the bed. With tears in her eyes Stella explained that she had had so many friends and relatives, but now she was alone. She said she didn't know anyone else in the world who would have done for her what I had done.

I remained with her helping her as much as I could until her cousin's wife arrived to accompany her to the hospital. I thanked God for having given me the chance to love.

H.B.

FAMILY LIFE

Weakened family life is one of the greatest social ills of our time.
The "New Family" Movement has as its aim to bring the Focolare spirit of unity into family life, so that each family will be deeply united within itself and with other families.

The marvelous plan of God's love

We knew for some time that my husband, Mario, would be transferred by his firm to New York. It was not something we could look forward to, for it is not easy to leave one's city, which for us is Naples, where we have lived all our lives.

I am fifty years old, Mario is 53, and our children, two boys and two girls ranging in age from 17 to 26, are grown up by now. One of the girls is about to graduate from the University of Rome and is also engaged to be married, so we couldn't ask her to come with us; but could we leave her all alone so far away?

So many questions, so many worries and fears were troubling our minds—would I be able to learn a new language at my age. We were facing something so entirely new, so different and unknown, especially for the children, that we often asked ourselves whether this could really be what God wanted us to do. We decided to attempt other solutions that might allow us to stay in Italy, but before doing so we made a pact to ask God to show us his plan, by letting his will alone emerge as the right thing to do and blocking any other road that didn't fit into his plan for us.

We soon got his reply when a contract for a job in Italy, already signed and agreed upon, had to be cancelled because of the sudden death of one of the two partners of the firm involved. It was a clear sign that God's plan was to take us to New York, and this thought gave us strength in the most difficult moments after our arrival in the United States.

Often, when oppressed by problems, we felt we were in the wrong place, but then immediately we remembered the answer. "Someone else brought us here," Mario and I would tell each other.

But why? There seemed to be so very little we could do for God, at least concretely, under these circumstances. There was the handicap of the language, and life was so different that we hadn't yet been able to adopt it completely. It seemed to be draining us of all our energies.

Yet there was one thought that came to us over and over again, taking always deeper root. Perhaps in this moment God wanted nothing from us but our hearts; perhaps he wanted them in a new and exclusive way. If everything around us seemed to be crumbling, it was most certainly happening so that the one true reality of our life would remain standing—God.

A new rapport with him was born in our hearts. With him there was no language problem. He was always there, ready to listen to us, to make us understand that behind every event of our life, whether sad or joyful, we would always find him and his mysterious love.

We felt that in our relationship with him we received so very much. There were many people giving us a helping hand. Here, too, in New York, we found many friends who live the choice of God with us and they became our family. They even offered us a home to live in while we looked for our own. They were always at hand and we felt their strong and constant love giving us new strength to tackle the problems we had to face every day.

In the meantime Mario and I realized that something new was happening between us. We discovered that our relationship with one another had changed; it had become deeper and more refined. Perhaps it was because all the hardships were so dif-

ficult that we felt we would almost die if we were not continuously intent on maintaining or re-constructing the unity between us. One thing was certain—living the Gospel sentence which at one point in our lives had truly fascinated us, "Where two or more are gathered together in my name, there I am in their midst" (Mt. 18:20) became more and more essential to us, to the point that we could no longer live without His presence in our midst.

With the children, too, we found a new bond of mutual love, expressed in so many different, subtle ways. It seemed our relationship was no longer the usual parent-child relationship. They shared our difficulties and sufferings and tried to lighten our burden by taking some of it upon themselves.

I could feel, for instance, the deep tenderness with which my children watched me go back to school to learn English. They were concerned about me and knew exactly how they could best help me. They took on some of the housework to leave me more time to study, and when they came home in the evening from school or work they would sit down with me and help me with my lessons while certainly they would have preferred to relax and go back to speaking Italian.

These concrete acts of love bore fruit in a new sharing among all of us. It allowed us to get to know one another better even on a human level and really enter into the other's life. We began to see the marvelous plan of God's love for us and the reason he had taken us so far away from our country.

Bice Spagna

Images FOR words

"Culture
is
born
of
man's
journey
toward truth..."

Pope John Paul II

The great Athanasius

In our series on the first centuries of Christianity as though seen through the eyes of a contemporary reporter, we look at the aftermath of the Nicaean Council and the resultant explosion of Arianism which evoked a situation of continuous tension within the Church. Athanasius became the Bishop of Alexandria, by popular acclaim and, through his own personal example of strength of character, maintained a courageous battle against the errors of Arianism despite interference from the political authorities so as to protect the truths that were fundamental to the faith.

by SILVANO COLA

As long as I live I shall never cease to be amazed at the person of our bishop who, against all odds, has managed to check emperors, restrain the imperial police, curb various councils summoned to condemn him, and keep an eye on the whole episcopate of the eastern world.

The most astonishing thing of all is that he, although he has been at one and the same time both the most abused and the most sought after, has come, so to speak, to be considered "The Official Voice" of the Church ... even by those who are among the most outspoken of his opponents. It seems as though all the world acknowledges that as long as he lives, the Nicene Faith will continue as the 'Only Faith' of the Church, despite all the efforts, sometimes subtle, sometimes patently violent, that have been attempted by many people—even among those in the highest places, and for the most sincere reasons, namely, to render comprehensible to 'human reason' and by trivializing with over-simplication, the mystery of God.

But I must try to be systematic about this, working over some of the points that I have jotted down during those years which date from the close of the Council of Nicaea until today, the second of May, A.D. 373, a day of infinite glory, together with infinite sadness for today Bishop Athanasius is dead. That man who, for me, is one of the greatest saints we have had in the Church.

A.D. 328

Bishop Alexander died today, April 18.

June 7: Today, by tumultuous popular acclaim, Athanasius—Secretary to the late Bishop, was proclaimed Bishop of Alexandria. The jubilant crowd was heard chanting 'Athanasius for Bishop;' while several even more influential voices made themselves heard above the general uproar, extoling his many virtues in such terms as, "He is an honest man; a true Christian; and a true ascetic. We want him to be our bishop."

There were, of course, other voices! A group of Arians with grim faces were obviously beside themselves with fury. I very much doubt that they will sit quietly for long.

A.D. 332

Athanasius' policy is now clear. He sets forward the truth with utmost simplicity; and then, with the same simplicity —and it would appear to us with evident contentment, or at the very least, an interior joy—he accepts everything that follows, having already anticipated it!

Twice in one year he has felt obliged to withdraw from his Church in Alexandria to avoid a confrontation with the Arians and their companions. The Arians, of course, wanted Athanasius to reinstate them in the Church. Athanasius, justifiably, demanded of them this assurance. "Do you believe in one holy and perfect trinity? Do you recognize as one and the same God, the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit: not as Creator and creatures, but as co-existing together as one Creator? Do you accept also that the Trinity is not merely a symbolic expression of faith,

but a reality; and that this means that the Father is the origin of all being; that the Son is the origin of all being; and that the Holy Spirit is the origin of all being?"

Of course, they replied ... "But Arius says ..." And so no one was able to progress any further! Athanasius will never be deterred, not even when an emperor intervenes... and what has an emperor to do with theology? The Emperor Constantine has sent word to Athanasius and demanded that he accept the Arians, or else—to quote the Emperor—"I will remove you from Alexandria!" Athanasius therefore left, rather than compromise the faith.

During the enforced absence of Athanasius, another group of schismatics (the followers of a man called Melitius) returned to found and organize a church in schism, (the legality of which Bishop Athanasius resolutely refuses to acknowledge!) These, intervening in the dispute, sent three of their number to Constantine to accuse Athanasius on various offenses, as ridiculous as they were false.

Fortunately the Emperor Constantine quite cursorily dismissed these trouble-makers, and he allowed Athanasius to return to his diocese in time for Easter. Moreover, the Emperor has written to Arius and his followers threatening them with heavy fines if they do not return to the Nicaean faith.

A.D. 333-335

Arius ingratiated himself to the Emperor and so tempered the presentation of his doctrine in terms which, the Emperor being little accustomed to theological subtleties, were accepted as being in conformity with the creed of Nicaea; and so the Emperor once again commands Athanasius to welcome them back into communion with the Church. Once again Athanasius declines; and yet again the struggle and the barrage of denunciations flare up around our bishop.

This mosaic located in the church of Santa Sofia in Constantinople depicts the Emperor Constantine.

A.D. 335

The Emperor Constantine wished to celebrate the 30th anniversary of his accession to the imperial office with a solemn religious ceremony. Everyone suggested that it would be the perfect occasion to call together another council to bring peace among all Christians. The Emperor was delighted. But the

fact was that the idea was put forward by those who were hostile to Athanasius. Soon they were crowding into Tyre. Such a tribunal as that was designed to be afforded an opportunity of discrediting, once and for all, the Bishop of Alexandria.

Athanasius is, of course, obliged to be there; and the charges begin to rain down upon him. It so happened that not one bishop who agreed with Athanasius was able—or allowed—to be present at that sitting. By the grace of God, however, all the uproar caused the guards to get so fed up with it all that they helped Athanasius to slip away unobserved and set him on his way for Constantinople.

"That just proves our case," howled the Arians. "He's run away, so he must be guilty!" To add insult to injury, so to speak, they proceeded to accuse him of holding back the distribution of wheat to no lesser a city than that found by the Emperor Constantine himself, the capital, Constantinople, the new Rome! By a clever but unscrupulous move, the Emperor was tricked. Athanasius was arrested, and deported to France, to the City of Treves (Trier). It was thought not to be easy for him to disturb the peace of the Empire from such a remote place; but they reckoned without taking into account the fact that Athanasius was a prolific and brilliant writer!"

A.D. 336

Treves is a beautiful city, full of life and intellectual vitality. The spiritual climate is not particularly sound because of the militarism of the officers and soldiers stationed there, but Athanasius preaches mostly about the spiritual life of the monks of the Thebaid—the upper plains of Egypt around the capital, Thebes—and even in Treves he was able to foster in many people a vocation to the monastic life.

Arius, on the crest of his wave, suddenly died in Constantinople. Upon his death those faithful to Athanasius begged the Emperor to send them back their bishop; even that most solitary and ascetic of the monks of the Thebaid, Anthony, wrote letter after letter to the Emperor on behalf of his friend and bishop. But all to no avail. The Emperor was adamant. A letter still remains, in his own handwriting, decrying Athanasius as "that proud and insolent trouble-maker, against whom there stands the findings of an ecclesiastical tribunal" ... and refusing ever to allow his return.

A.D. 337-340

Upon the death of the Emperor Athanasius returned to Alexandria. No sooner had he set foot in his own diocese, to the profuse acclamation of his people, than there was a ship dispatched for Rome laden with new accusations against him! The Arians even illegally installed an 'anti-bishop' called Gregory, on the Episcopal throne. Not surprisingly the supporters of Athanasius rebelled against him, and once again scuffles erupted. The police intervened, but unfortunately there were one or two deaths, several injuries, and a church was set on fire. Athanasius agreed to avoid further bloodshed and, under police escort, embarked for Rome to supplicate the Pope. Pope Julius I welcomed Athanasius, who brought into the open all the monstrous things that were happening in Alexandria.

A.D. 342-346

It was a physical impossibility for me to keep track of everything that happened in these few years. Athanasius virtually lived out of a suitcase! No sooner would he set foot back in Alexandria than he would have to leave again. He was almost continuously on trial. For the Arians it became an obsession with them to enforce his silence and his disappearance. Their indictments were so cunningly contrived and orchestrated so as to attempt to delude both the civil powers and even the Pope, in Rome.

Athanasius was summoned to synods and councils in Milan, Treves and Sardica, (the city in Bulgaria now known as Sophia). Eventually, if Athanasius appeared at a hearing, the Arians would abandon the debate and meet on their own. Athanasius insisted that the last word, regarding the faith, belongs to the Pope.

Despite all the efforts of the Arians to propose a new formula of faith Athanasius managed to ensure that not one iota (and especially not the vital one!) of the Nicene Creed was changed when, in A.D. 343 the Emperors convened the Council at Sardica.

During his return to Alexandria Athanasius made a pilgrimage to Adrianapolis to pray at the tomb of his great friend Bishop Lucius, who had been martyred, bound hand and foot with chains, along with ten lay

workers, by his enemies. Unfortunately he was not able to have time to go out to Armenia to visit his priests and deacons who had been deported there, or to Libya to console two of his exiled bishops.

Politics are politics! The Emperors are all but shouting themselves hoarse again on behalf of Athanasius! Constans, the Emperor of the eastern empire, has done no less than to prepare a formal guard of honor to welcome its bishop back into Alexandria! It's a celebration, but will there be religious peace at last?

A.D. 346-356

It is less than two years since Athanasius took up again his reins of office, and already there are almost four hundred bishops in communion with him and with Rome. Even some of those who had 'longed to see him dead' have sought his absolution. Meanwhile the Nicaean Faith has spread even to Ethiopia, thanks to our dedicated bishop. And what humility! In a letter to the monks of the Thebaid he wrote ... "Feeble though I am by nature...;" yet, when at the Synod of Milan the Emperor Constans forcefully attempted to impose his own will and ideas upon the assembly, arrogantly declaring,"The will of the Emperor, that is the rule of the Church," Athanasius retorted, 'Despite all your power, you have no authority within the Church." The Emperor Constans thundered back at him, "Guard your tongue. The Arian Bishops are more respectful"; but Athanasius replied calmly, "Maybe, but ours is not a religion for cowards."

Not surprisingly, after an exchange like that Athanasius was in exile yet again! On this occasion he went and hid himself among his monastic friends of the Thebaid, just at the time when Anthony, the patriarch of monasticism, whom everyone is already venerating as a saint, died. Anthony and Athanasius! What a triumphant team they were! Two close friends; two saints who have been beacons of light for Christ in a century of confused Christian doctrine and ever more permissive state morality.

A.D. 357

In Alexandria, with Athanasius gone, it seems that the days of persecution are on us again! The bishop appointed by the Emperor is George of Cappadocia, a man who loves money more than the Gospel. He has at his beck and call a battalion of armed guards who drive out the catholic bishops faithful to Athanasius, and send the clergy either into exile or to forced labor in the mines. Meetings are prohibited; the laity are humiliated and terrified.

Even from a distance, Athanasius remains a thorn in the flesh of the new establishment. Everyone has to admit that 'the invisible Patriarch' has more power and influence than all the heretics and the civil authorities put together.

Athanasius must be found and eliminated. To that end the secret police scoured, for six years, the Theban wastelands, interrogating all the monks; not a trace of Athanasius was to be found. He, in the meantime, had remained peacefully hidden among them writing letters to sustain the faith of his flock.

One day he got too near the search parties and was nearly caught. He was sailing up the Nile, his boat too close to the shore, when he was stopped by the secret police. "Have you seen Athanasius?," they shouted. "Yes, I think so," he replied, disguising his voice somewhat. "Is he anywhere about?" "I'm absolutely sure he must be. I think you must be quite close to him. If you row hard he'll be yours."

And they lowered their oars and rowed off!

A true Alexandrinian, the Bishop of Alexandria! But he could not have let them capture him; there was too much left for him to do; to counteract all the venom that was being spread abroad by all the heretics, which was so much more dangerous because it was made the more easily swallowed by an attractive rationality; to relate in book after book the wretched history of the Arians; and to make people fall in love with Jesus, the God made man.

How strange: Arius who believed he could win over all mankind with arguments refuting the divinity of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ultimately found himself empty handed; while Athanasius, wherever he went, generated the Church. But, you know, when all is said and done it really is not strange, because I remember that he once wrote: "You wish to understand who is the Word? Then purify your soul and imitate the love of Christ; because only thus can you understand something of the Word of God." □

What is the Focolare Movement?

THE BEGINNINGS

FOCOLARE means "hearth," "family fireside." What first strikes people when they come in contact with members of the Focolare, whether in small groups or in large gatherings, is the atmosphere of a family. It is a family formed by many different people in various walks of life. The Focolare Movement is also known as the "Work of Mary." Under this name it was approved by Pope John XXIII in 1962.

The Focolare Movement began in 1943 in Italy. In the midst of the terrible destruction of World War II, Chiara Lubich realized that God is the only one worth living for. As a result, she began to center her life on the Gospel, together with a small group of young women who followed her. Their ideal became one of striving toward the fulfillment of Jesus' last prayer to the Father: "May they all be one" (Jn.17:21).

The life of Chiara and her first companions, and the spiritual way they spontaneously followed, gave rise to the unique form of spirituality of the Focolare Movement, a spirituality of unity. It has proved to be a powerful means of introducing the Gospel into modern life, of going to God together.

WHO ARE THE FOCOLARINI

Single men and women live in separate communities called Focolare Centers. Their principal aim is to achieve unity among themselves through mutual charity practiced twenty-four hours a day. They follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. They work as other laymen and women in regular jobs and professions.

Some married persons, even though continuing to live in their families, participate fully in the life of either the men's or women's Focolare Centers in their common effort to achieve this same unity. They are called "Married Focolarini" and form the backbone of a vast Movement within the Movement, called the New Family Movement.

THE VOLUNTEERS AND THE NEW HUMANITY MOVEMENT

The Volunteers, also called the "Volunteers of God," are a large group within the Focolare Movement; they would like to transform all human realities according to the Gospel spirit. The Volunteers are the backbone of the mass movement called New Humanity. The aim of this Movement is to help form a society made of men and women who are made "new" by the Gospel message and who can then bring new life to all fields of human activity (education, business, etc.). This results in new social relationships which, in turn, lead to the realization of new structures of society.

GEN

The new generations of the Focolare Movement form another Movement or, better, three movements: the Gen 2, the Gen 3 and the Gen 4 Movements, divided according to their various age groups. "Gen" stands for new generation. The Gen have committed themselves to living the Gospel message of love and to sharing with other youth the conviction they have that the Gospel is the answer to every question and the motive for everything they do.

THE MOVEMENT AMONG THE RELIGIOUS

Men and women religious — although they live according to their own rules and constitutions and are already a distinct part of the Church through their religious families — can also be associated with the Focolare.

Contact with the Movement helps them to focus their attention on the specific charism of their founders, and to see how it can be lived in the present time.

PRIESTS — PRIESTS' MOVEMENT —SEMINARIANS — PARISH MOVEMENT

Many diocesan priests are committed to living the spirituality of the Focolare Movement. Some of them live in community. They form the backbone of the Priests' Movement which is made up of priests who live the spirituality of unity.

FOCOLARE FAMILY

The largest group within the Focolare Movement is made up of men, women and young people who are connected with the Movement without having any formal ties with it. Their bond of unity stems from their acceptance of its spirit and their desire to live it.

ECUMENISM

The Movement not only crossed the political boundaries of more than 100 countries, it has also gone beyond the barriers erected for centuries between the various Christian Churches.

Ecumenical activities take place in the different parts of the world where the Movement exists.

In the past few years a promising, ongoing dialogue has been established with faithful of other religions.

SUMMER MARIAPOLIS

Summer meetings are held every year for those interested in the Movement and for those who wish to come into contact with it. For one week persons of all ages and walks of life are exposed to the spirituality of unity. Above all, they strive to practice it by creating among themselves a rapport that molds them into a community. It is intended to be a basic experience of such intense unity that the people will be able to bring it back into their own environments. And this is the most striking fruit of these conventions. They tend to be models of a world which lives according the Gospel.

PERMANENT MARIAPOLIS

The need to prolong the experience of the summer meetings brought about the birth of small cities called Permanent Mariapolis. They are made up of young men and women, as well as whole families, who are there for a designated period of time to be formed according to the Gospel spirit of unity.

They also attend classes in Sacred Scripture, Theology and Sociology and work for their own support.

MARIAPOLIS CENTERS

In addition to the Permanent Mariapolis, there are Mariapolis Centers, which are training centers for the members of the Movement.

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